



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
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NEWS RELEASE

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Aspiring leaders learn how to transform challenging schools RIDE launches academy for school turnaround

On Monday (August 20), the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE) will welcome the first class members to the Academy for Transformative Leadership, a new initiative designed to recruit, prepare, and support leaders who will take on the challenge of transforming the lowest-achieving schools in the state.

The participants in the academy will spend the year working with a mentor principal and with a coaching team of nationally recognized experts to develop their skills and expertise in school leadership, problem-solving, motivation, communication, management, and school reform.

“School leaders have a unique opportunity to make a difference in the lives of their students, their staff members, and their community,” said Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. “Excellent leadership is especially important in schools facing the challenges of persistent low achievement or high dropout rates. I am confident that the Academy for Transformative Leadership will prepare a new cohort of principals who can lead the way as we work together to accelerate all of our schools toward greatness.”

The five Aspiring Turnaround Leaders in the first class of the Academy include two Providence teachers, two Providence assistant principals, and one administrator (Director of Testing and Professional Learning) from Greenville, Mississippi. RIDE selected them through a rigorous application and screening process, and they will receive a salary during their year in the Academy. On completion of the program, the Turnaround Leaders will attain certification as administrators, and they will commit to working for at least three years in one of the 29 schools that RIDE has identified for intervention (Focus or Priority Schools).

RIDE has contracted with the NYC Leadership Academy (NYCLA), a nationally recognized pioneer in the field of school leadership development, to help develop the preparation and support programs for the Academy. These programs include the leadership-preparation program for the Aspiring Turnaround Leaders, an executive-coaching program for principals serving students in low-achieving schools, and intensive professional development for principals in low-achieving schools and their leadership teams.

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“We are excited to be a part of Rhode Island’s bold vision for school leadership,” said Irma Zardoya, Chief Executive Officer of NYCLA. “The Academy for Transformative Leadership represents a comprehensive and intentional approach to developing and supporting educators to do the very hard and very important work of turning around the lowest-performing schools. We look forward to leveraging our experience and to working alongside Rhode Island educators to build a sustainable leadership program that will benefit Rhode Island students for years to come.”

Other organizations involved in the Academy include the Center for Leadership and Educational Equity, a Providence-based nonprofit with expertise in preparing aspiring principals and in developing and supporting professional learning communities for school leaders, and Safal Partners, a firm experienced in strategic technology design and implementation that will assist with the development of online training resources for Rhode Island school leaders.

The Academy for Transformative Leadership began its work last month with a two-week summer institute that provided professional development for 9 principals, 23 assistant principals, and 27 teacher leaders.

The Academy is financed through the \$75-million federal Race to the Top grant that Rhode Island won in 2010. The total cost for the Academy for the current fiscal year will be \$755,419.

Note to media: The media are welcome to visit the Academy on Thursday (August 23) at 1:30 p.m., in the Shepard Building (URI), Room 443, 80 Washington St., Providence.

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